

Building Better Lives Grants Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Below are some frequently asked questions about the Building Better Lives grant opportunities. For more detailed information, please refer to our application guidelines or contact our program staff.

How many grant cycles are there each year?

We offer three open grant cycles each year:

- November (decisions by December 30, payments in January)
- March (decisions by April 30, payments in May)
- July (decisions by August 31, payments in September)

What is the typical grant duration? Do you offer multi-year grants?

Grants periods are typically one year, starting from when the funds are received. In some cases, multi-year funding may be considered for ongoing programs that demonstrate strong outcomes.

How much funding can we request?

Typical awards range from \$5,000 to \$15,000. BBLG is meant to provide flexible investments that help move important work forward. While we recognize many organizations are navigating large funding gaps, BBLG is not intended to replace major federal or statewide funding sources. We encourage requests that are right-sized to the scope of the project and show how these funds would meaningfully support progress for community-based work.

Can our organization apply more than once per year?

Yes, however, only one application per organization per cycle will be accepted.

If our organization was funded previously, can we apply again?

While it is possible to reapply after receiving funding in the previous round, it may be unlikely that we would fund the same organization – and especially the same project – twice in a row. We work to distribute funding thoughtfully across organizations, priorities, and geographic communities, and that broader context informs our decisions. That said, we may consider supporting the same organization again, particularly if the request reflects a different project or phase of work.

Is sub-granting allowed?

We expect the funding recipient to directly carry out grant activities, or to have a formal fiscal host arrangement in place. BBLG funds cannot be regranted or passed through to another organization. However, stipends to support participant engagement or compensate community members for their expertise are allowed.

Can we use grant funds to hire a consultant or contract with a business for services we can't provide in-house?

Yes. Grant funds can be used to hire a consultant or contract with a business if the services directly support your project and align with the intent of the grant.

Who is eligible to apply for a grant?

Eligible applicants include nonprofit organizations, Tribal entities, and public agencies serving communities within our funding region.

What if our organization isn't based in the region?

We're open to funding statewide or national organizations when the work clearly serves communities in our region, including our counties and Tribal Nations.

Are family childcare providers eligible to apply?

No. We do sometimes have other resources specifically for family child care providers. Please connect with one of our Child Care Program Officers

Are private religious schools eligible to apply?

Yes, for non-religious programming. Please be clear in your application about how funds will be used so we can confirm they support secular educational or community programming.

Can Community Funds apply?

Community Funds are generally not eligible to apply directly for BBLG funding because the Northwest Minnesota Foundation holds the 501(c)(3) status. Community Funds are typically set up to raise and distribute resources to other organizations or community-led projects, and since BBLG funding does not allow sub-granting, we encourage the organizations doing the direct work to apply themselves.

That said, Community Funds play an important role and are always welcome to help spread the word, support local partners, and encourage strong community

projects to apply. If you have an idea for how your Community Fund could partner with a local organization on a project, we'd love to hear from you – please reach out!

Can fiscally sponsored organizations apply?

Yes. A formal fiscal sponsorship agreement must be in place, and the fiscal host must be a tax-exempt entity. For-profit entities and businesses are not eligible to apply under a fiscal sponsor.

If I applied last round, do I need to reapply?

Yes, you will need to reapply each cycle. Past application submissions are available in the NMF Web Portal for your reference.

Can multiple organizations working together on a project both apply for funding?

No. One organization should apply as the lead applicant on behalf of the partnership.

Can an organization submit multiple applications for different projects?

No. Organizations may submit only one application per application cycle.

Do you require matching funds?

No. Matching funds are not required. It's helpful to understand your full funding picture, but applications are not scored higher based on secured or matching funds.

Do we need MOUs or formal agreements for any identified partnerships?

No. We don't require formal agreements, but please clearly explain the partnership and each organization's role in your proposal.

Will you fund both new and established organizations?

Yes. We support both long-standing organizations and newer efforts that show strong planning and alignment with our goals.

Do you fund direct services or broader community work?

We fund a range of work, including direct services, community engagement, and partnerships that strengthen long-term solutions.

Can this grant be combined with other funding for the same project?

Yes. Just spell out your full funding plan in the proposal. It's helpful for us to know

whether other funding is confirmed or if you've applied and are still waiting to hear back.

How do we apply?

Visit our website during an open application period and complete the online application via the NMF Web Portal. Registration is required.

Can we preview the application questions before applying?

Yes. A sample application form is available on our website in both Word and PDF formats, as well as in the Applicant Resource Folder.

Is it necessary to speak with a program officer before applying?

No, it is not required. However, we encourage applicants to reach out if they have questions or need guidance.

What happens after we submit our application?

You will receive confirmation of your submission. Program staff may follow up with questions or request additional information during the 30-day review process.

How long does it take to hear back after applying?

Award decisions are communicated no later than the last day of the month following the application deadline with payments typically disbursed by the month following when award decisions are made.

Can we receive help with our application?

Yes. We offer application support, including language access and technical assistance. Please contact us early in the application window. Send an email to grants@nwmf.org or call 218-558-5326.